

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, April 12, 2006

Slaughter Urges NEA Funding to be Returned to 1994 Levels

112 Members of Congress Add Signatures to Letter Sent to Key Federal Appropriators

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, this past Monday sent a letter she authored to Reps. Charles Taylor (R-NC-11) and Norman Dicks (D-WA-6), Chairman and Ranking Member respectively of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, asking for the National Endowment for the Arts to be funded at \$170 million per year.

The last time the NEA received funding at this level was in 1994.

"By supporting the arts and cultivating new talents, the NEA contributes to our country and its culture in countless ways," Rep. Slaughter said. **"I think we should appreciate just how important art is in our daily lives, and ensure that this agency is fully funded so that it can continue its valuable work."**

The complete text of Rep. Slaughter's letter can be found below:

April 7, 2006

The Honorable Charles Taylor

Chairman

Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee

B-309 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Norm Dicks

Ranking Member

Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee

1016 Longworth House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Taylor and Ranking Member Dicks:

We urge you to support full funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) at \$170 million in the Fiscal Year 2007 Interior Appropriations bill. The NEA was last funded at this amount in 1994, and has never recovered from a 40 percent budget cut in FY1996. Today, its programs remain seriously underfunded. The American public wants and needs an affordable investment in the arts.

While the President's FY2007 budget request is level with current FY2006 funding for NEA, the budget request reallocates funds at the expense of some valuable programs. For example, Challenge America ensures that direct grants from the NEA reach underserved populations, including places where opportunities to experience the arts are limited by geography, ethnicity, economics or disability. Challenge America uses the arts to enhance America's communities through grants for arts education, youth-at-risk, cultural preservation, community arts partnerships and improved access to the arts for all Americans. Through this program, NEA grants are awarded to artists in almost every Congressional District.

Federal funding for the arts has a ripple effect on our economy, and it is critical to leveraging private funding. An investment in NEA is a great investment in the economic growth of every community. The nonprofit arts industry alone generates \$134 billion annually in economic activity, supports 4.85 million full-time equivalent jobs and returns \$10.5 billion to the federal government in income taxes.

Moreover, the NEA supports life-long learning in the arts which is critical to the development of our children. The NEA's education programs have helped to sustain support in local communities for arts education, which has been proven to help close the education achievement gap as well as to benefit children and adults in many important ways. Kids score higher on their SATs, have greater self-confidence, and are more focused in their studies when they have arts education.

An increase to \$170 million would ensure that the NEA can continue to support the creation, preservation and presentation of the arts in every corner of the country, as well as fund popular initiatives like *Challenge America*, *American Masterpieces*, *Shakespeare in American Communities*, *Operation Homecoming*, and *Jazz Masters*.□

Without an increase, the NEA will be unable to maintain or expand programs or undertake new initiatives without diminishing existing programs.

Therefore, we strongly urge you to increase NEA funding to \$170 million in the FY 2007 Interior Appropriations bill. By approving this budget increase, you will strengthen the NEA's ability to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to benefit from the arts. We appreciate your attention to this request, and hope we can count on your support.

Sincerely,

(Signed)

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